

# Grieve the Beloved Children: Israel and the War on Children

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*The Palestinian Health Ministry reported on June 1st that a beautiful young woman medic, [Razan Ashraf Najjar](#), 21, was the second medic to be killed by Israeli army fire since March 30th. To date, Israel has killed 130 and injured more than 13,400 non-violent people in Gaza for protesting the siege. Among the injured are 238 medics, 29 shot with live fire after being directly targeted with high-velocity gas bombs.*

Still, Israel is accorded impunity. Even when crimes are acknowledged, they “may” constitute a war crime or a crime against peace (Nuremberg), Israel’s destruction of Gaza’s entire infrastructure “may” render Gaza unliveable by 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020, Gaza “may” be a humanitarian disaster, or Israel’s use of unconventional weapons in 2006, 2009, 2014 and 2018 *should* be investigated. And always underreported is the participation of nations and institutions in Israel’s “military-securitization-pacification” complex. Israel has long violated arms embargoes imposed on some of the most murderous regimes, and has produced and used prohibited weapons with impunity. Germany [recently donated to Israel a submarine](#) capable of carrying 144 nuclear warheads (as part of its Holocaust reparations!).

The Israeli historian Ilan Pappé has substantiated through archival records Israel’s ethnic cleansing of 1948 in the formation of the Israeli state, methodically researched and planned since before the Holocaust. Pappé now defines Israel’s modus operandi as an “[incremental genocide](#).” At the 2014 Russell Tribunal, former UN Special Rapporteurs on the Occupied Territories John Dugard and Richard Falk also found evidence of “incitement to genocide.” More recently, *Haaretz* writer [Gideon Levy wrote](#) that Israel’s real purpose in its Gaza operations is “to kill Arabs” and that the Israel Defence Forces has a “map of pain.”

[Israel’s lies](#) have been closely interrogated by Noam Chomsky and former National Director of the American Jewish Congress Henry Siegman, among many others. They write that Israel surreptitiously instigates and pre-plans innumerable provocations until Palestinians eventually retaliate, allowing Israel to justify massively disproportionate reprisals in the name of “self-defense.” They document Hamas’ consistent compliance with truce agreements (unlike Israel’s systemic violations). The world should be forewarned that Israel has long used this same strategy against Iran, secretly “provoking Iran into responding with war or measures just stopping short of war” while manipulating public opinion with “semi-official horror scenarios” about Iran.<sup>1</sup>

Israel and the Children of Palestine

Poetry often captures best what seems unimaginable. Palestinian poet [Mahmoud Darwish’s](#)

[eulogy to Edward Said](#) identifies Israel's "maximum proficiency" in killing and Palestinian hunger to live:

...Adept snipers, hitting their target  
With maximum proficiency  
Blood  
And blood  
And blood.  
...And scream that you may hear yourself,  
and scream that you may know you're still alive,  
and alive,  
and that life on this earth is possible.

Aharon Shabtai's poem "[l'Accuse](#)" is a requiem for [Muhammad al-Durrah](#), a child killed with "maximum proficiency."

The sniper who shot at Muhammad the child  
Beneath his father's arm  
Wasn't acting alone -  
...The tree doesn't go green  
When a single leaf unfurls,  
many wrinkled brows  
leaned over the plans.  
History has known  
foreheads like these-  
technicians of slaughter,  
bastards in whose eyes  
morality is a pain in the ass.....  
Each one of these authorities  
sees to his part in the plan:  
one's in charge of liquidation,  
another of the daily harassment;  
this one's field is public relations,  
that one's collaboration;  
this one deals with expulsion and fencing,  
that one with the destruction of homes.  
Because, when it comes down to it, we're only speaking  
of a population of a certain size,  
which needs to be pounded and ground  
then shipped off as human powder.  
... For the sniper who fired at the child  
is only a single stinking instrument  
within an enormous orchestra...

Killing and tormenting children and parents are found in many other "civilized" nations: the U.S. policy toward Black and refugee children; the half million dead Iraqi children over the course of the American war and occupation; and Canada's "[scooping](#)" tens of thousands of Indigenous children into residential schools. Britain's maltreatment of whole classes of children is captured in Jonathan Swift's [Modest Proposal](#) to eat Irish children to solve the demographic threat and food shortages.

In Israel's disproportionate attacks on Gaza, one-third to one-quarter of the fatalities are children. In Operation Protective Edge, Israel killed 551 Gazan children while one Israeli child was killed. As a result of the Gaza siege imposed in 2007, 70 per cent of babies at nine

months suffered from anemia, and about 15 per cent of Gaza's children are reported as stunted in growth due to malnutrition. Closures prevent infants from leaving Gaza for life-saving cardiovascular surgery. As of January 2008, there were no first line paediatric antibiotics available in the Ministry of Health. Physicians for Human Right-Israel (PHR-I) filed a petition and a request to the Israeli Supreme Court for a temporary injunction to stop the nightly sonic booms, deeming it a collective punishment of the civilian population that particularly traumatized children, causing hearing loss, night terrors, and bedwetting, but the petition was rejected. Barring goods like potato chips and toys has to do with absolute power, not security.

Israelis shamelessly desecrate dead Palestinian children and their families. Former Prime Minister Golda Meir:

"We can forgive the Arabs for killing our children. We cannot forgive them for forcing us to kill their children. We will only have peace with the Arabs when they love their children more than they hate us."

Golda Meir, the guilt-inducing Jewish mother *in extremis*, is utterly devoid of feeling the "majesty and burning" of a child's death (Dylan Thomas). Minister of Justice Ayelet Shaked has called for the slaughter of Palestinian mothers as they give birth to "little snakes" and Netanyahu accuses Palestinians of selecting photogenic pictures of [child victims](#) for propaganda. Israeli soldiers scrawled on a mourning notice for 16-year-old [Musab Tamimi](#), killed by a sniper's shot to the throat:

"'Son of a bitch, slut, dead.' For good measure, they drew a Star of David... Neatly folded, the notice is now in the possession of the bereaved father."

Israel tried to blame the father and cameraman of faking the killing of [Muhammad al-Durrah](#), the child in Shabtai's poem "J'Accuse". Thousands of Palestinian children have been kidnapped, incarcerated, and tortured in an apartheid juvenile justice system.<sup>2</sup>

There appears to be no self-awareness. In the article "[Tell the Truth, Shimon](#)" [Peres], Gideon Levy admonishes the spineless prime minister to "go to the village of Yamoun and meet Heira Abu Hassan and Amiya Zakin, who lost their babies three weeks ago when IDF soldiers wouldn't let their cars through the checkpoint, while they were in labor and bleeding. Listen to their terrible stories." Yigal Shochat evokes the gas chamber "selections," writing that checkpoint officials "make a selection" as to who will be allowed to proceed to a hospital or to a maternity ward.<sup>3</sup>

Sakharov Peace Prize recipient Nurit Peled-Elhanan lost her own daughter to a suicide bombing. She speaks of "the megalomania of the insolent and corrupt leaders of the state of Israel ... [who] have succeeded in converting this whole country into an altar on which they sacrifice other people's children to the god of death...."

The late Dr. Eyad al-Sarraj, former director of the Gaza Community Mental Health Program, wrote that

"children experienced beating, bone-breaking, injury, tear gas and acts of

killing, and that the most excruciating psychological experience was to see their fathers beaten helpless by Israeli soldiers without resistance.”

Avi Mograbi’s documentary *Avenge But One of My Two Eyes* provides insights into the education of Israel’s Jewish youth. From earliest childhood through young adulthood they are repeatedly told by adults in positions of authority about the heroic and exciting suicide terrorism myths of Masada and Samson Under conditions of siege or of insults to male narcissism, they learn that male leaders are entitled to ask hundreds of women and children to commit suicide or to kill thousands of people. These seductive myths conflate the experiences of victimhood and heroic aggression, leading to guiltless entitlement to kill. According to Netanyahu,

“We don’t educate our people, our children in suicide kindergarten camps, as happens in the Palestinian side, and you should see what Hamas is educating them to do .... And the worst thing that I see, the worst thing, is that they use their children, ... they don’t give any thought about them.”

Gideon Levy writes of Israel whitewashing “kill-and-destroy’ operations, with cruelly ironic names like “Locked Kindergarten.”<sup>4</sup> For a brief time the 2006 operation was named “[Samson’s Pillars](#)” before it was changed to “Summer Rains.”

#### Israel and Legalized Illegality



The carnage of the Great March of Return has its precedents: the newly described butterfly bullet belongs to a line of non-conventional and illegal weapons tested in the “lab” of Gaza, including, Dense Inert Metallic Explosives (DIME), flechette shells, white phosphorus, and cube-shaped cluster bombs. Israel cleverly twists the law, claiming that Gaza is a “parastatal entity” to evade the legal obligations of the occupier. It claims that its aggression prevents a greater aggression and is in compliance with the principle of lesser evil.<sup>5</sup>

The late Israeli linguist and author, Tanya Reinhart, documents in detail the “scale and horror” of Israel’s planned killing and maiming in response to Palestinian protest. Since 2000 Israel has targeted the head, legs, knees, or eyes “by carefully aimed shots” that will cripple

and maim people for life. By December 2001 there were 25,000 injured Palestinians. Reinhart quotes Ehud Barak:

“that with a stable average of five casualties a day, Israel could continue ‘undamaged’ in the media for many more months.”

She adds that there are no hospitals to care for them, that many are “near starvation amidst the infrastructure destruction that is inflicted on their communities.”<sup>6</sup> Israel’s doctors have put Gazans on a “diet” by calculating the minimum caloric intake for each age group.

Israel, with its educated population, has squandered the post WWII possibility of “never again” for all people. Hannah Arendt and Albert Einstein opposed Israeli statehood, and warned of fascism, racism, and militarism. In 2004 about 200 Israelis, including founder of Physicians for Human Rights-Israel Dr. Ruchama Marton and Jerusalem Assistant Mayor Meron Benvenisti, signed the [Olga Document](#):

“The State of Israel was supposed to tear down the walls of the ghetto; it is now constructing the biggest ghetto in the entire history of the Jews; ...[ if Israelis] muster within ourselves the appropriate honesty and requisite courage, we will be able to take the first step in the long journey that can extricate us from the tangle of denial, repression, distortion of reality, loss of direction and forsaking of conscience, in which the people of Israel have been trapped for generations.”

Instead, Israel (and its allies) have justified and facilitated the imprisonment, maiming and massacre of civilian populations with appalling regularity. Here are the final words of “J’Accuse”:

when “that man smiles, .... when hoarsely, he pronounces the word ‘Peace’ - mothers wake up trembling;... and now, at long last, he’ll roll up his sleeves and get down to the work at which he excels, and bring about a blood bath.”

The 1955 exhibit *The Family of Man* included the photo of Jewish people herded out of the burning Warsaw ghetto, with the caption -

“Humanity is outraged in me and with me. We must not dissimulate nor try to forget this indignation which is one of the most passionate forms of love” (George Sand).

Israel has reversed its position from victim to perpetrator and, as such, has become an instrumental part of the deadly global political economy of arms and incarceration. The Palestinian struggle is of global significance, a fight for life in the face of legalized illegality, the Orwellian “peace” institutions that do not protect (as with the U.S. again just [vetoing a UN resolution](#) to protect Palestinians), proliferating nuclear and new weaponry, closed borders, and the scientifically calculated disposability of a people.

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## Notes

1. Israel Shahak, *Open Secrets: Israeli Nuclear and Foreign Policies*, London: Pluto Press, 1997, pp. 53-55.
2. Catherine Cook, Adam Hanieh, Adah Kay, *Stolen Youth: The Politics of Israel's detention of Palestinian children*, London: Pluto Press, 2004 and Defense for Children Intl. Palestine Section, 2004.
3. Yigal Shochat, "Red line, green line, black flag," p. 129, and Gideon Levy, "Tell the truth, Shimon," p. 81, in Roane Carey and Jonathan Shainin, *The Other Israel*, New York: The New Press, 2002.
4. Gideon Levy, *The Punishment of Gaza*, London: Verso, 2010, p. 24.
5. Jeff Halper, *War Against the People*, Pluto Press, 2015 and Eyal Weizman, *The Least of all Possible Evils*, Verso: 2011.
6. Tanya Reinhart, *Israel/Palestine: How to end the war of 1948*, New York: Seven Stories, 2002, pp. 112-16.

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